School report

Inspection of Walsall Academy

Lichfield Road, Bloxwich, Walsall, West Midlands WS3 3LX

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	**Requires improvement**
The quality of education	**Requires improvement**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Good**
Personal development	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Good**
Sixth-form provision	**Good**
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Walsall Academy is a welcoming school where pupils usually get along well with one another. They respect the individual differences of their peers and treat each other fairly. Pupils feel safe and are well cared for. They typically behave well in lessons. Pupils know that staff will respond quickly to any behaviour that falls short of the mark. Leaders deal effectively with any incidents of bullying or derogatory language.

Pupils enjoy school and work hard. Leaders expect pupils to achieve well. They want every pupil to become a 'happy and employable child with the skills and qualifications to succeed in life'. The vast majority of pupils achieve these aims. However, there are some weaknesses in the way the curriculum is designed, particularly in key stage 3. This means that some pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils, parents and carers value the wide range of activities offered that broaden pupils' personal development. These experiences enhance the curriculum and provide pupils with many cultural experiences. Opportunities such as expeditions, residential trips and theatre visits help pupils and students to build their resilience and character. A high number of pupils take advantage of the activities on offer.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

School leaders have designed a broad curriculum that is intended to be ambitious for all pupils. However, some subject leaders have not clearly identified the knowledge they want pupils to learn. Therefore, some pupils, particularly in Years 7 and 8, do not develop a secure enough understanding of the subject. There are variations in how well pupils achieve between vocational and academic subjects. Most teachers use assessment to check precisely what pupils know. They also provide pupils with feedback to help them understand what they have done well and what they need to do to deepen their learning.

Pupils choose which subjects they will study for GCSE at the end of Year 8. This means that they do not study a range of subjects with a similar breadth and depth to the national curriculum up to the end of Year 9. As a result, pupils miss content that is taught in Year 9 in the subjects they have not opted to take. For subjects pupils do not study at GCSE, pupils do not develop their knowledge in the subject in sufficient depth.

Students in the sixth form benefit from a high-quality curriculum offer. Staff's strong subject knowledge helps students to achieve well. Students value the quality and precise feedback they receive. Many of them act as role models to their younger peers. For example, some students support younger pupils as reading mentors.

Leaders provide teachers with appropriate and helpful information to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They have focused on ensuring that teachers use this information well to support pupils in lessons. Leaders ensure

that those pupils who are not yet secure readers receive support to help them improve their confidence and fluency in reading.

Staff have positive relationships with pupils. This helps to create an environment that is conducive to learning. Teachers are implementing the school's recently revised behaviour policy effectively. Lessons are usually free from disruption. When there are concerns around a pupil's behaviour, staff take a restorative approach to helping pupils to avoid repeating the behaviour. This is working well and has also contributed to a reduction in the number of suspensions.

Leaders prioritise the personal development of pupils. They have created a comprehensive curriculum to support pupils' learning about citizenship, relationships, health and sex education. Parts of this are delivered through the tutor programme and includes pupils from all year groups. Pupils have many opportunities to celebrate and learn about the diversity of different cultures. For example, pupils study the events surrounding Windrush Day.

Leaders provide pupils and students with high-quality careers guidance. This helps to prepare them well for the next stage in their education. As a result, an impressively high proportion of pupils and students move on to appropriate further education, training or employment.

The trust and local governing board know the school's strengths and address any identified weaknesses quickly. They work well to support school leaders when needed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders at all levels make safeguarding a priority. They complete appropriate recruitment checks on everyone they employ. Staff receive regular training and understand the procedures they should follow if they are worried about a pupil. Leaders follow up promptly on any concerns raised. They work effectively with external agencies to support vulnerable pupils. Leaders have also prioritised additional mental health training for staff. This is benefiting pupils.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. For example, they learn about healthy relationships and how to stay safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, particularly in key stage 3, subject leaders have not clearly identified the knowledge pupils are expected to learn and the order in which it should be taught. This means that pupils do not build their knowledge on what

they already know well enough. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum in all subjects clearly identifies the key knowledge pupils need to learn and in what order.

- Key stage 3 pupils do not study the full range of subjects to the end of Year 9. As a result, they do not gain a sufficient depth of knowledge in subjects that they have not chosen to study for GCSE. Leaders need to consider how they have designed the curriculum and make sure that it enables pupils to have the opportunity to acquire an appropriate depth of knowledge in all subjects studied at key stage 3.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use Ofsted Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further guidance on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	133697
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10241044
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,376
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	313
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Roy Harrison
Headteacher	Simon Rogers
Website	http://www.walsallacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	19 and 20 November 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Thomas Telford Multi Academy Trust.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider for a small number of pupils in key stage 4.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors focused on the following subjects: English, mathematics, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. Inspectors examined leaders' curriculum plans, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked with pupils about the way these subjects are taught. They also looked at other subjects to check how they are planned and taught.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about behaviour, attendance, the curriculum and improvement planning. The school's website was also checked.
- Inspectors talked to staff and leaders about safeguarding arrangements. They examined how leaders make employment checks on staff and scrutinised further safeguarding records. They also asked how incidents reported by pupils are recorded and analysed.
- Inspectors observed informal times of the day to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors held meetings with members of the trust and governors, the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally to pupils and staff to gather general information about school life.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Nicola Beech, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Bianka Zemke	His Majesty's Inspector
Simon Smith	Ofsted Inspector
Dan Robinson	Ofsted Inspector
Sukhbir Farar	Ofsted Inspector

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